



W. L. Adams Center for Writing

FORMATTING PAPERS IN SBL STYLE

(Notes and Bibliography Form)

“SBL style” refers to guidelines for citing sources and formatting papers as set forth in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd edition, a resource for writers and publishers in the fields of “ancient Near Eastern studies, biblical studies, early Christianity, and rabbinic studies.”¹ SBL style uses Chicago style as its base, but modifies it in several ways. Where SBL lacks an official rule, it encourages use of *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, or Kate L. Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9th edition, which is Chicago style adapted for student researchers and their papers.

1 General Guidelines

Let’s start with the basics!

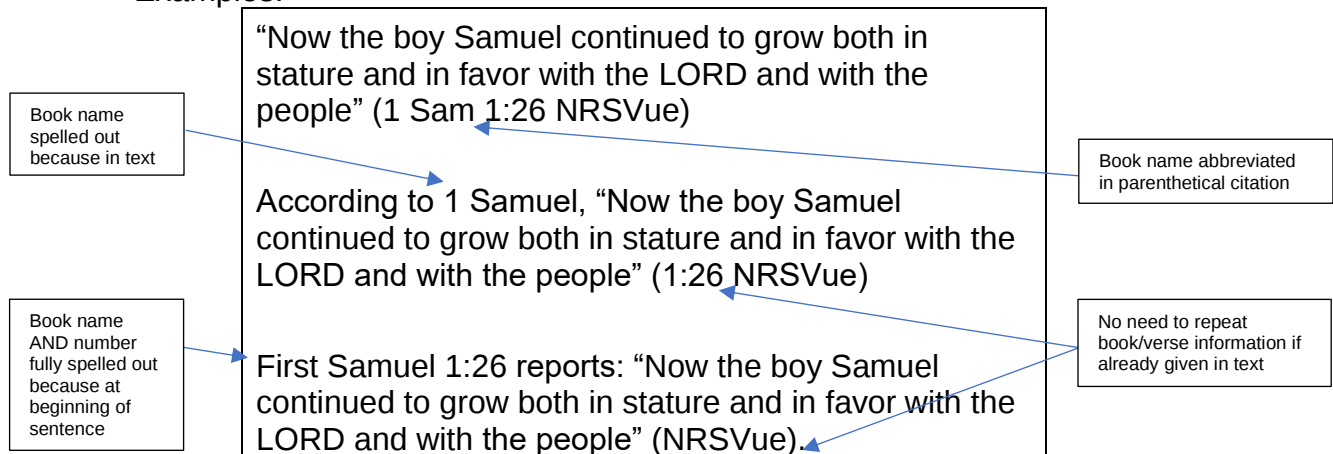
- Use white 8 ½ by 11-inch paper and black print.
- All margins must be 1 inch at left, right, top, and bottom.
- Double-space all text within the document except for block quotations, table and figure captions, and footnotes and endnotes.
- Use 12-point font for text and 10-point font for footnotes and endnotes.
- Choose a font that is readable; most prefer Arial or Times New Roman.
- SBL style documents EITHER include “superscript” in-text citations that correspond to footnotes or endnotes OR in-text citation (see two options in § “Citing Sources in Chicago Style”).
- Number all pages in the bottom center of the page, except the title page. You will begin your numbering with a “1” on the first page of text. If your paper contains front matter (e.g., an abstract or a table of contents), use lower case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii..) in the bottom center to number those. The title page is not numbered.
- Include the title of the paper at the top of the first page of text.
- Include an alphabetized bibliography of the sources you quote or consult at the end of your paper.

2 Abbreviations and Citing the Bible

¹ Billie Jean Collins and the Society of Biblical Literature, *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 1.

2.1 Citing the Bible

- Even if you are using footnotes/endnotes, it is appropriate (even encouraged) to use parenthetical in-text citations for Bible verses.
 - If you are only, or primarily, using one translation, you can include a foot/endnote with the first citation and then not need to repeat the translation every time (Example foot/endnote: “All biblical citations from the NRSVue unless otherwise noted.”)
- Do not include Bibles in your bibliography, generally.
- When citing the Bible, only provide the translation you are using is required, not any publication information.
- Use colons between chapters and verses (e.g., John 5:8-9)
 - Always use numbers when referring to bible chapters and verses (e.g., “John 5:8-9,” NOT “John chapter five, verses eight through nine”).
- When listing multiple passages, use commas to separate verses in the same chapter, and use semicolons to separate subsequent chapters. Also use semicolons and book names to separate subsequent books.
 - E.g., “There are repeated references to both Joseph and Jesus weeping in the Bible (Gen. 43:40; 45:1-2, 14; 46:29; 50:1, 17; Luke 19:28-41; 22:39-46; John 11:1-43; Heb. 5:7).”
- Use the full-length name of the biblical book if writing it in the prose of a sentence or title, but abbreviate books’ names in parenthetical citations.
 - Use Roman numerals or numbers for two-part books (e.g., 1 Corinthians or II Kings) UNLESS the book name is at the beginning of a sentence or title; then, write out the word (e.g., “In the book of 2 Kings,” OR “Second Kings includes....”)
- Examples:



2.2 Standard SBL Bible book abbreviations (* = no change; use full name)

Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament	HB/ OT Abbrevs.	New Testament	NT Abbrevs.
Genesis	Gen	Matthew	Matt
Exodus	Exod	Mark	Mark*
Leviticus	Lev	Luke	Luke*
Numbers	Num	John	John*
Deuteronomy	Deut	Acts of the Apostles	Acts ^(*)
Joshua	Josh	Romans	Rom
Judges	Judg	1-2 Corinthians	1-2 Cor
Ruth	Ruth*	Galatians	Gal
1-2 Samuel/ <i>1-2 Kingdoms</i>	1-2 Sam <i>1-2 Kgdms</i>	Ephesians	Eph
1-2 Kings/ <i>3-4 Kingdoms</i>	1-2 Kgs <i>3-4 Kgdms</i>	Philippians	Phil
1-2 Chronicles	1-2 Chr	Colossians	Col
Ezra	Ezra*	1-2 Thessalonians	1-2 Thess
Nehemiah	Neh	1-2 Timothy	1-2 Tim
Esther	Esth	Titus	Titus*
Job	Job	Philemon	Phlm
Psalms(s)	Ps (Pss)	Hebrews	Heb
Proverbs	Prov	James	Jas
Ecclesiastes/ <i>Qoheleth</i>	Eccl/ <i>Qoh</i>	1-2 Peter	1-2 Pet
Song of Songs/ Canticles	Song/ <i>Cant</i>	1-2-3 John	1-2-3 John*
Isaiah	Isa	Jude	Jude*
Jeremiah	Jer	Revelation	Rev
Lamentations	Lam		
Ezekiel	Ezek		
Daniel	Dan		
Hosea	Hos		
Obadiah	Obad		
Jonah	Jonah		
Micah	Mic		
Nahum	Nah		
Habakkuk	Hab		
Zephaniah	Zeph		
Haggai	Hag		
Zechariah	Zech		
Malachi	Mal		

Apocryphal Texts	Abbrev.	Apocryphal Texts	Abbrev.
Tobit	Tob	Prayer of Azariah	Pr Azar
Judith	Jdt	Song of the Three Young Men	Sg Three
Additions to Esther	Add Esth	Susanna	Sus
Wisdom of Solomon	Wis	Bel and the Dragon	Bel
Sirach/Ecclesiasticus	Sir	1-4 Maccabees	1-4 Macc
Baruch	Bar	1-2 Esdras	1-2 Esd
Epistle of Jeremiah	Ep Jer	Prayer of Manasseh	Pr Man
Additions to Daniel	Add Dan	Psalm 151	Ps 151

2.2.1 Other Handy Abbreviations

Apostolic Fathers	AF
Dead Sea Scrolls	DSS
Nag Hammadi Codices	NHC
Septuagint	LXX
Vulgate	Vulg.
Masoretic Text	MT
<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>	BHS
<i>Novem Testamentum Graece</i>	NA ²⁸

3 Citing Sources in SBL Style

It is important to cite your sources after summarizing, paraphrasing, or directly quoting information you got from *any* source.

Chicago style offers **two options** for formatting in-text citations:

- Notes and Bibliography (either footnotes or endnotes)
- Author-date parenthetical citations and bibliography.

3.1 SBL Notes Citation Style (footnotes or endnotes)

The text of the paper:

Susan Niditch notes that women in Genesis often propel narrative and character “transition and transformation.”⁴

The corresponding footnote:

⁴ Susan Niditch, “Genesis,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 93.

- How to insert a footnote/endnote in Microsoft Word:

- If using a PC, select the “References” tab then choose between footnotes or endnotes OR press CTRL + ALT + F.
- If using a Mac, select the “Insert” tab then choose between footnotes or endnotes OR press CMND + OPT + F.
- Don’t stress:
 - The software automatically sequences and adjusts the font size of superscripts.
 - If you cut or paste text containing superscripts, the software will re-number the sequence automatically.
 - Auto-formatted endnotes will contain superscripts rather than the numerals with periods, which are also acceptable in Chicago style.
- In both footnotes and endnotes, the first time you cite a source, you should use the **full citation**, like the Niditch example above. Each subsequent time you cite that source, use only the essential features of author, a shortened form of the title, and the page number. This is known as the **“short form.”**

Footnotes:

Long forms

Short form

-
- ¹ Susan Niditch, “Genesis,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 93.
- ² Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 13.
- ³ Niditch, “Genesis,” 94.

Endnotes:

Long forms

Short form

Endnotes

- ¹ Susan Niditch, “Genesis,” in *Women’s Bible Commentary*, 3rd ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 93.
- ² Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 13.
- ³ Niditch, “Genesis,” 94.

- Formatting Direct Quotations in Notes Style
 - Include shorter direct quotes in your writing like so:

Such myths often aim to inculcate what Denise Buell calls a “vocabulary of peoplehood” that could function both as self-identification and polemic.⁶

- Block Quotations in Chicago Style

- If a quotation runs five lines or longer, format it as a block quotation by indenting the entire prose extract five spaces. Omit quotation marks.
- Introduce the quote by using a complete sentence in your own words, followed by the block quotation, single-spaced. To avoid “patchwriting,” do not use block quotes excessively or back-to-back.

As Gale A. Yee wrote in her foundational article on intersectionality in biblical studies:

An intersectional hermeneutics would interrogate the social locations of the writers and how their gender, ethnicity, class, et cetera shaped their writings, reproducing and disseminating power to preserve the status quo or, as in the case of the prophets, to resist, protest, and denounce it. As a method of interpretation, intersectionality presumes that our own unique social locations, our own distinctive amalgams of gender, race, class, religion, et cetera, influence our readings of texts and our writing. Thinking “intersectionally” compels us to reflect seriously on how these fusions influence why and in what specific ways we study the Bible.²

3.2 SBL Author-Date Citation Style (in-text citations)

- In-text citations, much like MLA or APA, do not use footnotes/endnotes, but simply include the author’s last name, the year of publication, and the page number (if applicable).

Susan Niditch (2012, 93) notes that women in Genesis often propel narrative and character “transition and transformation.”

Such myths often aim to inculcate what Denise Buell calls a “vocabulary of peoplehood” that could function both as self-identification and polemic (Buell 2005, 2).

- **All** sources you cite within your paper must be included in your bibliography, with the exception of bibles.
- If you are using more than one source from the same author published in the same year, use lowercase letters in alphabetical order, placed after the publication date, to differentiate them: e.g., (Buell 2005a, 2) and (Buell 2005b, 47).

4 Formatting the Bibliography

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. New York: Basic Books; Perseus Books, 2011.

-----, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*. New York: Norton, 1996.

Anderson, Cheryl B. *Women, Ideology and Violence: Critical Theory and the Construction of Gender in the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic Law*. London: T&T Clark International, 2004.

Arnold, Bill T. *Cambridge Companion to Genesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.

Alphabetize the list by author surnames. If the source has no author listed, use the title to determine where to place it in alphabetical order.

Begin each entry flush with the left margin but indent subsequent lines 5 spaces for a “hanging indent.”

If using multiple sources from the same author, use five dashes in place of their name for all subsequent sources after the first one.

5 Formatting the Title Page

[NAME OF INSTITUTION]

[TITLE OF PAPER]

SUBMITTED TO [NAME OF PROFESSOR]
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
[COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE]

BY
[YOUR NAME]
[MONTH DAY, YEAR]